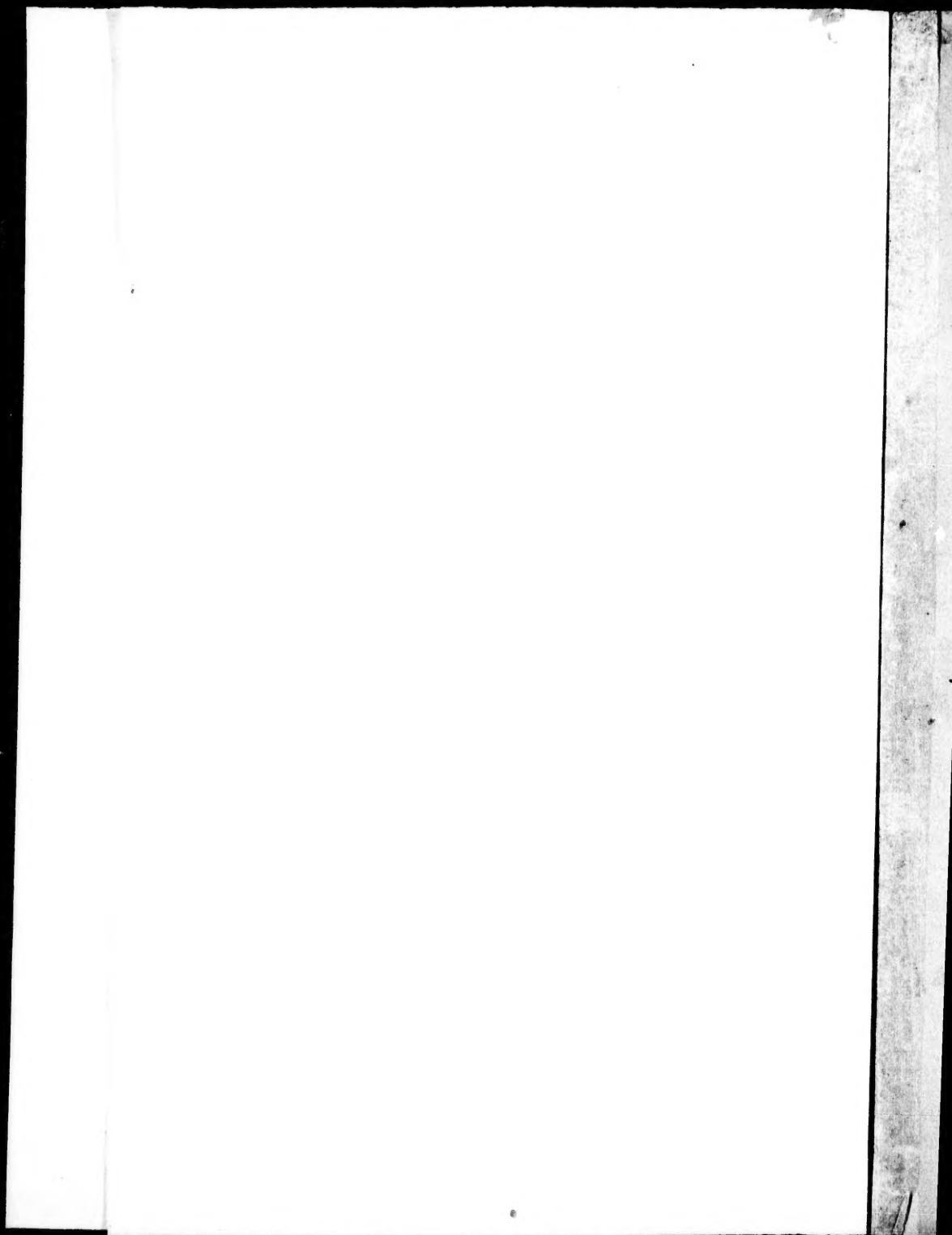




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A PASTORAL LETTER.

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Nov. 3/58

A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE LAITY OF THE
DIOCESE OF TORONTO.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,—The object of this address is to draw your attention to the unsatisfactory state of the provision made for the maintenance of our clergy, as it is manifesting itself, in many of our parishes and missions.

I do not feel that the introduction of this important subject requires any apology—the only apology I need to make, and the only fault which I have to confess, is that you have heard from me so little on so great a duty. I have not however taken it up altogether from my own choice, nor at the solicitation of those in distress, and who may be looking earnestly for relief. No! most of these are, I believe, patiently and meekly bearing no common hardships: but they are silent sufferers.

It is those who expect to give, not those who expect to receive, who have been urging me to address you on this subject, and more especially since our day of Thanksgiving for the more than abundant harvest vouchsafed to us. Not that I was indifferent to the increasing wants of my clergy, the affecting proofs of which were coming daily before me; but as much general distress had for a long time prevailed throughout the whole community, I was induced to wait, till I should be able to announce some indications of the commencement of the practical effects of the bounty which our heavenly Father had during the last two years bestowed upon us, and I rejoice to say, that examples of generous movements in favour of giving the Lord's portion, where it is so justly due, are multiplying around us. These may not indeed yet be manifested in a way so general and effective as they might, and, I trust, soon will be; but nevertheless, in sufficient numbers to warrant me in regarding them as an omen of good, and indicating a growing desire on the part of our people to do something substantial as a grateful answer to God's seasonable interposition. And may we not with all due reverence call it His invitation to return a double portion of his bounty towards the support of his own appointed service!

When the matter has been thus regularly brought before our congregations, and they take it into their own hands, I feel assured that it will be responded to, as the Lord's work, and that their hearts will be stirred up and become alive to the most generous efforts to render it effective.

I had another motive for postponing this appeal—I waited till

Easter Monday, the day appointed by the Church herself for reckoning with her people, should be indicating its near approach, because to the faithful working of our vestries I look for relief from all our difficulties. It is the general custom among persons who love order and security in their affairs, and would neither wrong others nor themselves to make out at the close of every year a correct statement of their receipts and expenditure, and carefully to balance their accounts; and from the result to draw rules and inferences for their future guidance. This practice is found of so much importance that most of those who adopt it prosper, while those who neglect it sooner or later fall into ruin.

Now the Church, acknowledging the truth of the Divine maxim, that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light, has adopted an annual day of reckoning, and for this purpose has appointed Easter Monday. And I speak from experience, when I say that in those parishes where the vestries regularly meet and enter upon this reckoning conscientiously, and as before the Lord, and with the same precision and accuracy as faithful Stewards, Merchants, and Bankers do; the affairs of such parishes thrive and prosper. Every reasonable want is met and satisfied; and peace and contentment are established throughout the parish and congregation.

But in parishes where the vestries are not conscientious but careless, and the Churchwardens forgetful and negligent in the discharge of their duties, the affairs of the parish soon fall into irretrievable disorder and distress, and contentions follow. The truth of all this no one acquainted with the workings of our vestries will dispute, for it is of daily experience. You will not therefore be surprised when I avow, that I address myself on this occasion more especially to the vestries, and attribute to them the prosperity or decay of their respective parishes. Hence the remedy for all the parochial evils of which we complain is within yourselves, and may be effectually applied by every congregation which acts conscientiously. Now, as regards the claim of every clergyman on his congregation for the descent support of himself and family, I do not urge it as a claim upon your liberality, but upon your justice; for he has the same moral claim on his people for an adequate stipend, as the lawyer has on his clients, or the physician on his patients, for their fees, or as the merchant has for his profits, the soldier for his pay, or the labourer for his hard-earned wages.

The truth of this no christian can doubt; for Holy Scripture teaches that it is ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. Hence your obedience to this command is required not merely for the sake of the clergy, and their households, cast as they have been on the care of Providence, but for your own benefit, as well as the interests of our beloved Church in

general. These are interests which are intimately connected with her temporal position; nor can I without the most serious alarm and apprehension contemplate the condition of several of my clergy, who are, from the sordidness of their people, sometimes reduced to the greatest distress. Not that I believe such distress is likely to extend, or that the means of maintaining throughout the land a Gospel Ministry, shall ever be wanting; but there may be so curtailed by selfishness and unbelief as to be the cause of much suffering. What we wish and plead for is, that the amount of support should be sufficient, if not abundant; it should be like the heart within the body, which distributes its nourishment through all the frame, and warms with its circulating blood extremities which would otherwise grow cold, and die—but into this depth of misery I hope and trust our clergy will never fall, or that they will even approach to it. On the contrary, I feel hopeful, that when you have fairly and honestly weighed the claims of the Church and Ministry you will make them matters of prayer, as I am persuaded many of you already do, and that you will be directed by the Spirit of God how to act and what to give.

Under the Jewish or ancient dispensation, the Priests and Levites were separated from the people and entirely occupied in the immediate service of God. In our times the representatives or successors of these, our Deacons, Priests and Bishops, are also set apart from the common business of life; and being debarred from all secular employment, and shut up within the sacred circle of their spiritual offices, are expected to dedicate their undivided time, talents and influence to the numerous and momentous interests of the Church of Christ. It is for these I am pleading; not that we look to ordained Ministers only for carrying on God's work—the fathers and mothers of all christian families, and indeed all true believers in the Saviour should be daily exercised more or less in the same hallowed work.

But we find that both in the Old and New Testament God does not leave this inestimable duty to chance or the casual efforts of christian love; but He enjoins a regular Ministry to supply the necessities of His Church, and discharge the duties which His ordinances require. In imitation of His example, and at His express command a body of devout and able men are appointed to give themselves wholly to the Lord and His word; and so they are said in the language of Holy Scripture to dwell continually before the Lord.

In regard to the ministerial office, I remark without hesitation that it is impossible to exaggerate its vast importance. It is to devote our lives to the honour of God and the salvation of men—and since there must be men to the world's end, so there must always be an order of men to preach the Gospel; hence St. Paul impressively asks how shall men believe in Him of whom they

have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent? If Christ designed that the belief of the Gospel should be the way of salvation, then he must have designed that there should be men set apart to preach, and make known that way so long as the world continued.

With respect to provision, they have certainly no claim to wealth, but reason as well as Scripture manifestly direct that their provision should be competent, that in pecuniary matters they should be placed above anxiety, and enjoy a suitable position in the community in which they live—that they should be able, as occasion demands, to succour the poor, and exercise hospitality, as well as maintain in their households a decent and respectable appearance. Moreover, they ought to be enabled to live free from the dread, the distraction, and disgrace of debt; and in truth our love and reverence for Christ, and the welfare of His Church, are identified with the decent and comfortable maintenance of His servants.

The situation of that Clergyman is most trying, who is expected to maintain certain appearances in society, and has not the power of doing so,—who is perhaps frequently thrown with a large and generous heart into scenes of distress, only to have it wounded by his inability to relieve them; and because of this inability feels himself exposed to the suspicion of avarice and want of christian charity, while in truth he and his partner pass many a bitter hour in considering how they shall guard against disgracing the ministry, and their master.

And often when he goes to the house of mourning or to burial appointments, or to his closet, or even to the pulpit, he is haunted by a spectre; and that spectre is debt. That Clergyman may be (as I hope he is) ready with God's grace to carry his Master's cross; but when we view him harrassed and distressed in his path, with accounts on his table which he does not know how to meet, and with children around him, happy in their ignorance of their father's difficulties, whom he does not know how to feed and clothe, and establish in the world, surely such a man is not in a state to meditate sermons to his people, or, with his mind so troubled with household cares, to stand by the bed of death, and prepare the dying for approaching dissolution. Is it not true, that many a Clergyman's life is one long and painful struggle with straitened circumstances and privation; and does not the knowledge of this appalling fact often prevent parents, who would otherwise gladly devote some one of their sons to the Ministry of the Church, from exposing a hopeful child to a life of continued penury and hardship? Some persons are so foolish as to think that poverty is a protection against unworthy Ministers; but a pious dissenter Matthew Henry tells them, that a scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous Ministry.

My earnest wish in this pleading for my brethren is to place

them where in the exercise of a commendable frugality, they shall be above such worldly cares as mar their usefulness, and impair, if it do not paralise, their power for good. I wish to place them in the position for which Agar prayed,—“Give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with food convenient for me.”

I desire, when I admit a candidate to Holy Orders, and appoint him to a settled parish or mission to be able to say: when you go to the house of poverty go with some bounty in your hand, and if you meet a brother, an old and tried friend, hail him with a frank welcome and an offer of hospitality. I desire that he may be able to walk the streets without the fear of meeting a needy creditor; to go to his reading desk and pulpit without a blush on his honest face; and to look around on his congregation and boldly preach “owe no man any thing.” When he goes to his study and there pours out his heart to God, I desire that he may be able to do so with a mind calm and unruffled by pecuniary vexations; and last of all, when his work is done, and like St. Paul he has fought the good fight, and kept the faith, let him repose on his dying bed without fear that the children he blesses, and leaves behind him, shall be cast out destitute on a cold and ungrateful world.

I am aware that owing to the severe pressure of the times, many generous hearts have, for the present, little, or nothing to give; but what is above all money or money's worth, they can give us their prayers flowing from warm and grateful hearts. For our encouragement some are giving to the utmost of their power and under great difficulties; and if you, my brethren, take the subject to God in prayer and look at it in the light of conscience, and with a view to eternity, your contributions will increase, and those who never have had the subject fully and seriously before them will see it in a new light and give abundantly. It is a use of riches to which perhaps they have never been accustomed, but of which they never will repent. Like the seed scattered, as it would seem, a useless sacrifice in the spring, it returns in the harvest an hundred fold. “Honour then the Lord with thy substance, and thy barns shall be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”

In order to give practical effect to these remarks, I suggest to the vestry of each Church, to request from the Minister at the annual meeting on Easter Monday, a report of the unpaid dues of the congregation on account of his stipend for the preceding year. A committee should then be appointed, and empowered to take immediate and effectual steps for the collection of the arrears, that at the adjourned meeting which, according to established rule, takes place a fortnight subsequently, the claim of the Minister may receive full satisfaction: other debts are always considered imperative, and the necessity for their liquidation readily admitted, but surely no debt is more sacred or binding upon the enlightened

conscience than this. If other debts have a legal remedy, and the creditor is armed with power under the act incorporating the vestry to enforce his claim in due process of law, shall the debts we owe to God's Minister be more lightly regarded, and occasion be given for the application of that startling scripture remonstrance, "Will a man rob God?" If as a rejoinder the question be ignorantly put: "Wherein have we robbed Him?" Is not the answer supplied by the sacred volume "in tithes" or provision for my ministering servants and "offerings" for the service of my sanctuary? Should my suggestion be adopted, as I hope it universally may, this reproach, wherever it may exist, will be wiped away, and our churches and congregations enjoy a reputation for honesty and integrity in their dealings, which is now unfortunately too often called in question, to the injury of their own character, and to the vexation, disappointment, and distress of those who are set over them in the Lord.

In bringing this momentous subject before you, I might have dwelt more on earthly motives; but I take higher ground, I carry you with me to a purer region and to a nobler principle. Standing by the Cross of Calvary, I appeal to nothing lower than your love of Christ, who putting himself in the place of the poor and needy, has said, "I was an hungered, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; for inasmuch as you did it to the least of these my brethren you did it unto me."

I remain,
My dear Brethren,
Your faithful Friend and Brother,

JOHN TORONTO.

Toronto, 25th February, 1861.

P.S.—The Bishop requests the Churchwardens and Lay Delegates to bring this Pastoral Letter under the special notice of their respective vestries and congregations as soon as possible.

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